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Good Morning,

I am Nancy Krupiarz, Executive Director of Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance, an affiliate of the Michigan Fitness Foundation. Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of House Bills 4792 and 4799, the Vulnerable Roadway User legislation. It is an idea whose time has come.

Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance's mission is to "foster and facilitate an interconnected system of trails and greenways throughout the state for health, recreation, nonmotorized transportation, and economic development." Michigan is the #1 trail state with more miles than any other state in the country. Trails have become extremely popular over the last decade as they connect to neighborhoods, parks, schools, and civic and cultural destinations. In fact, they have become so popular that they are often the main spine that catalyzes the formation of a regional nonmotorized network, a combination of linked up on-road and off-road routes that connect people to where they want to go. Through these networks it is possible for people, even those that have been afraid to commute by walking or biking in the past, due to fear of traveling with motorized traffic, to incorporate biking and walking into their daily lifestyles, thereby enhancing their health and quality of life. Since it is impossible to build trails everywhere that people want to go, the on-road connections are crucial to making the nonmotorized transportation system work in every community.

Many of the people using trails are our most vulnerable populations: children with their families, seniors, people with disabilities, using wheelchairs, Amigos, etc. They use the trails as far as they can and complete their trip with an on-road connection for shopping, recreation, or other purpose. Now that there are an increased number of people adopting healthy, active lifestyles, Michigan needs remedies to make sure there is the education and law enforcement to make these nonmotorized trips as safe as possible.

The Vulnerable Roadway User bills are the first rung in the ladder to making drivers more alert to all the transportation users in the road right of way. There are many other provisions needed for increasing safety, too, such as education for drivers, bicyclists, and pedestrians, but this legislation targets the careless motorists that kill or injure while committing a moving violation. Having these provisions for more certain punishment of carelessness will mean that motorists will exercise more caution around these vulnerable roadway users, just as they already do for others that are protected with similar laws: construction workers, children in designated school zones, or for operators of slow-moving farm vehicles. Even though bicycle crashes are just 1.5% of all traffic crashes, according to a recent presentation by MDOT, they account for 17% of all crash fatalities, and that should stir the Legislature to action. A state Complete Streets law and 80 local complete streets policies are welcoming Michigan citizens to a healthier, more active way to live their lives. And they deserve the extra measure of safety that House Bills 4792 and 4799 will give them. Thank you.

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